

Alexander Pizhev

OLD PLOVDIV



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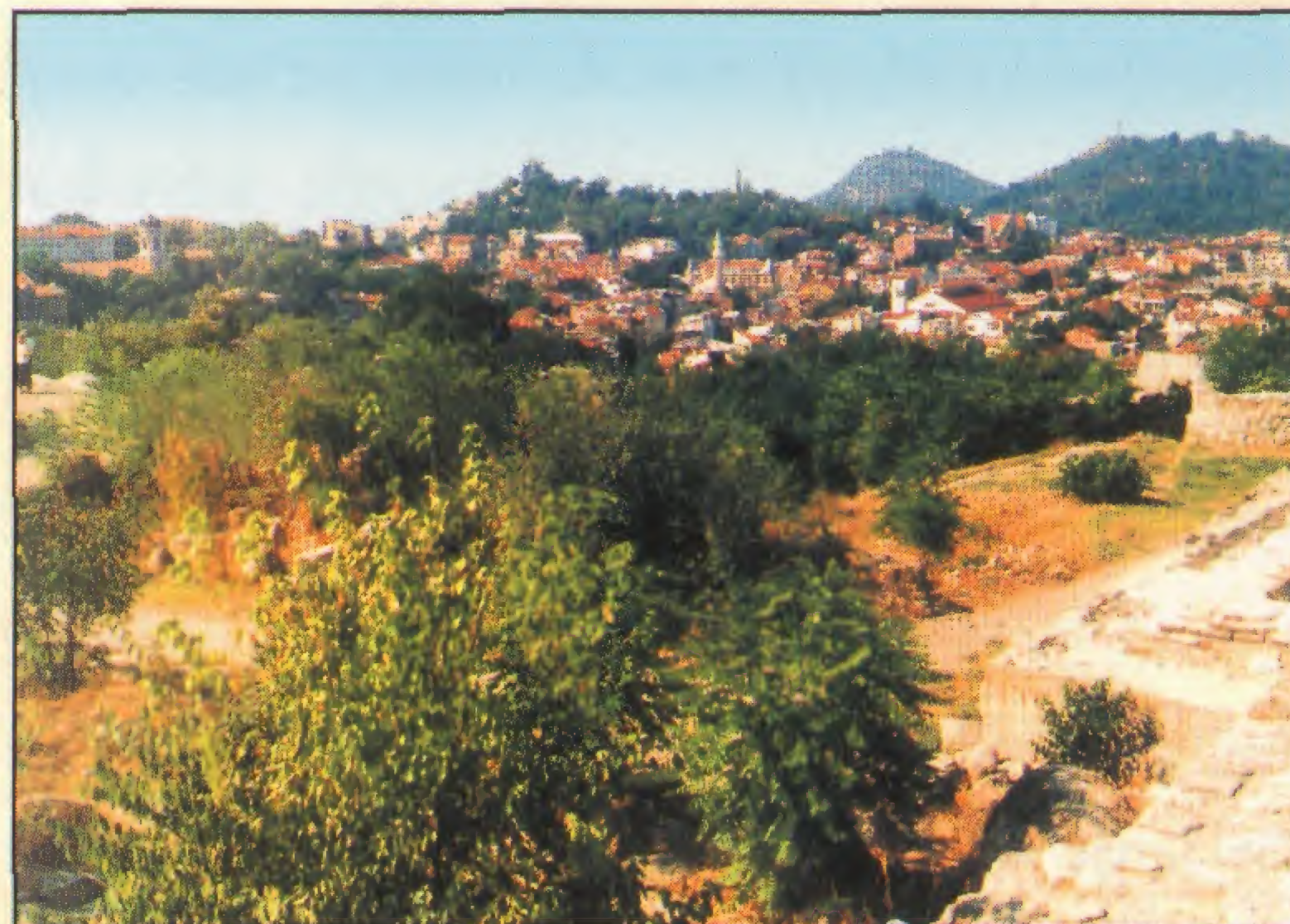
OLD PLOVDIV

 **НАБЕЖА**

OLD PLOVDIV

As far back as six thousand years ago Neolithic man appreciated the propitious combination of a fertile land, a large river and inaccessible hills in the heart of the Thracian plain.

Contemporary with Troy, Mycanea and the cities of Crete, Plovdiv grew into a proper town in the 12th century B.C. Ancient Greek writers attribute its foundation to Eumolpi – son of Haemus and Rhodope. The town was raised behind a fortress wall upon a cluster of hills – Nebet Tepe, Taxim Tepe and Jambaz Tepe. It adopted the name of its founder – Eumolpiade. A succession of names followed through the centuries – Philippopolis, Pulpudeva, Trimontium, Puldin, Felibe and Plovdiv.



Plovdiv and the Hills – general view

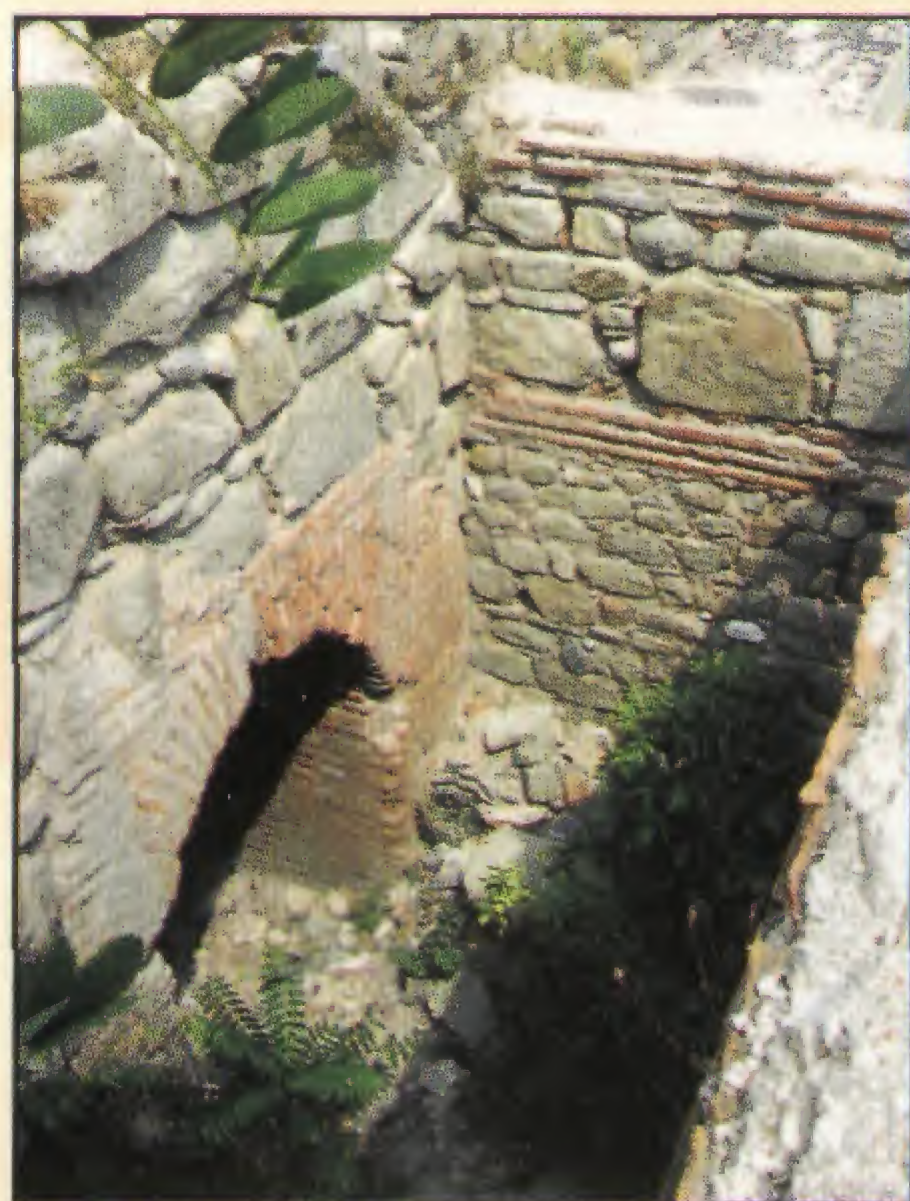
Cultural strata laid down by the centuries have been integrated in the appearance of the present day town. Antique, mediaeval and Revival Period monuments stand next to each other in striking architectural ensembles on the historic Three Hills. Old Plovdiv is a unique living organism built of archaeological remains, museums and excellent galleries, Revival buildings, functioning churches rich in frescoes, carved wooden ornamentation and religious articles, cozy cafes and restaurants, school buildings, old-time and new houses with romantic courtyards and picturesque cobbled alleys. In 1956 Old Plovdiv was declared an architectural-historical reserve and in 1979 it was awarded a gold European medal for its achievements in the preservation of historical monuments.

Decades of archaeological excavations on Nebet Tepe have uncovered numerous significant remains from antiquity and the earliest settlement on the hills. Archaeologists have identified fortification walls from various stages of antiquity. In the southern part of the saddle between Jambaz and Taxim hills there have also survived parts of the impressive fortress walls of the Acropolis and the South Gate. Eleven years of archaeological work unearthed, just inside the fortress wall, the remains of an imposing antique theatre, which was successfully conserved and restored. Another remarkable building was discovered at the western foot of Taxim Tepe hill in the Jumaya Square. A restored section of Philippopolis' antique stadium is displayed here nowadays. Nearby, to the south of the Three Hills are the remains of the large Roman city square – the forum (agora). Sections of the fortress wall running along the tops of the hills have also survived to our day. There are remains of the early Thracian and Hellenistic ages as well as repaired structures from the Roman and Byzantine periods.

THE FORTIFICATION COMPLEX on Nebet Tepe

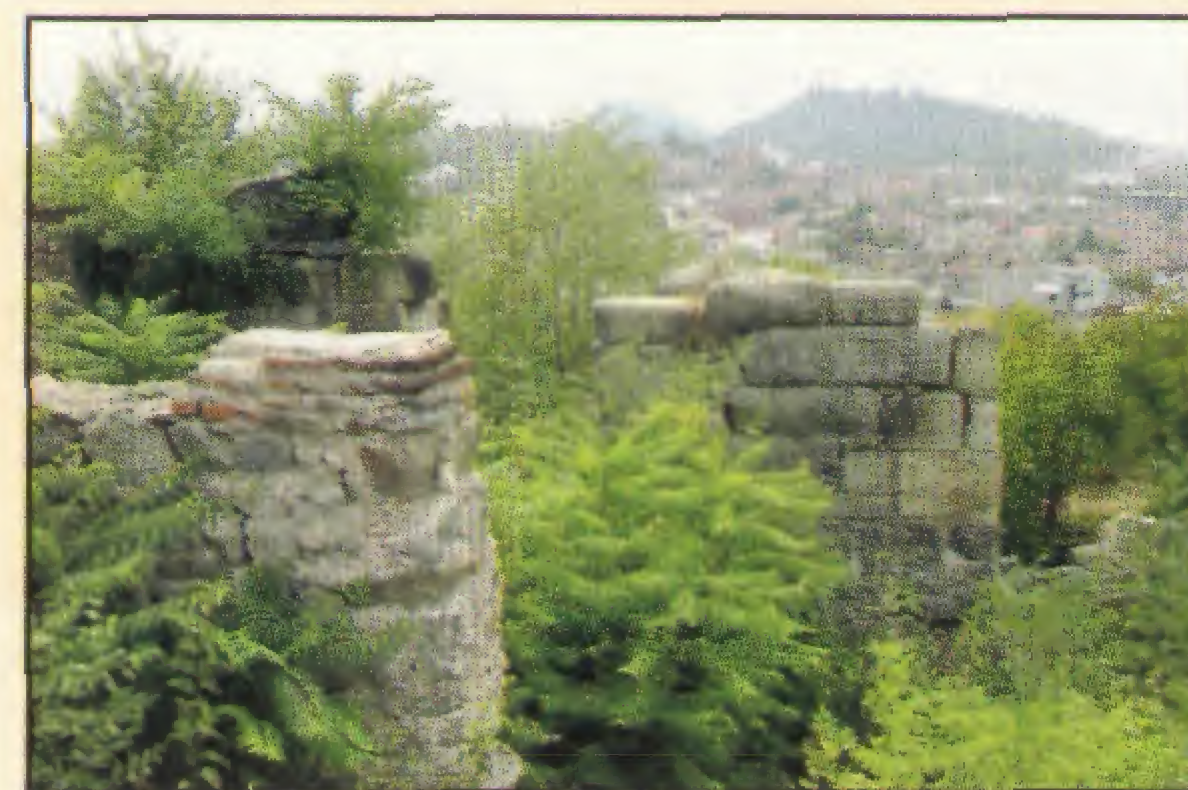
The top of Nebet Tepe bears vestiges of the first prehistoric settlement, which in the 12th century B.C. grew into a town. It has been established that this is the Thracian city Eumpoliade and one of the first urban settlements in Southeastern Europe. The basic features characteristic of the towns of the time are available – strong fortress walls, surrounding a sanctuary and a ruler's palace. Of special interest is the oldest part of the fortress, a drywall built of large syenite blocks in the so-called 'Cyclops' style. Later in history, when Thracian Eumolpiade expanded over the three hills and down to their foot (in Hellenistic age), the old settlement and the Nebet Tepe fortress turned into a citadel of the city's acropolis. The walls

stretched out to encompass the highest parts of all three hills. Dated to that time are the remains of the western fortress wall with a built in tower of impressive size and an entrance from the inner side. During



*Poterne – the secret exit
from the fortress
on Nebet Tepe*

the reign of Justinian the Great (6th c.) the northern wall was repaired and a secret exit (poterne) added. It was an arched passage with steps carved in the rock, which led to the foot of the hill and to the right bank of the Maritsa River. The exit is adjacent to the Thracian northern entrance into the fortress, which also provided access to the riverbank. The fortifi-



The quadrangular tower on Nebet Tepe



*Thracian fortress wall with steps
to the northern entrance*

cation on Nebet Tepe underwent reconstruction in mediaeval times, too. Easily identifiable are the sections rebuilt during the Second Bulgarian State (13th – 14th c.). At that time there were also added large water reservoirs to be used in times of siege. One of these, rectangular in shape, is of striking size, was covered by a domed roof and had a capacity of 3000 litres. It had a



*Mediaeval water reservoir
on Nebet Tepe*

gallery at one end, which led the water to a fountain. Most imposing are the fortress walls dating from the 12th – 14th centuries; they climb down the eastern side of the hill and measure 10m in height.

ANTIQUÉ AND REVIVAL PERIOD ENSEMBLE on Vitosha Street

There is a well-preserved section of the antique fortress of Philippopolis along Vitosha Street. You can see the acropolis wall built of large cut stone blocks during the time of Marcus Aurelius in the 70s of the 2nd c. as well as repairs from the 4th c. In early Byzantine times, probably during Justinian's rule, this part of the fortress was strengthened by means of an outer, adhering wall of alternating bands of stone and brick. Researchers have also identified the foundations of two triangular towers. During the National Revival terraced houses were raised upon the solid foundations, all with an exit into Saborna Street.



*Antique-Revival Period ensemble
on Vitosha Street*

ANTIQUÉ THEATRE

Trimontium's antique theatre lies on the low ground between Jambaz and Taxim Tepe. Archaeological excavations have uncovered one of the best-preserved antique theatres in

the world, built at the beginning of the 2nd c. during Emperor Trajan's rule. The theatron, the spectators' section, is amphitheatrical, in two semi-circles with a wide horizontal aisle in between. Each tier has 14 rows of marble seats divided into sectors by aisles. The area of the stage excels in architectural design. The skene at the back is a two-storey structure with lateral wings ending in imposing triangular pediments. Inscriptions and exquisite statues found



The Antique Theatre of Philippopolis



*The Western wing of the skene
of the Antique Theatre*

on the site

have been incorporated in the architecture of the building. The theatre must have seated 5 to 7 thousand people. A fire or an earthquake at the end of the 4th c. caused irreparable damage to this remarkable antique building. The splendid skene was completely demolished, just 20 out of the 28 rows of the theatron survived. In spite of the serious destruction, archaeological research made it possible to execute a successful restoration. Now the ancient building has been entirely adapted to the contemporary cultural functions of Plovdiv and it shows various performances before an audience of 5000 people.

ANTIQUUE STADIUM

The imposing remains of the stadium of Philippopolis (Trimontium) were discovered under the square west of Jumaya Mosque (Friday Mosque). Part of them is now displayed below the level of the busy street. The majestic structure measures 1000 Roman steps in length (250m) by 250 steps in width (74m). The main entrance into the stadium is below the junction of Knyaz Alexander I Street and Dr Valkovitch Street. It was designed in the solemn style of Asia Minor cities



like Miletus, Ephesus and Aspendos. The seats arranged in 14 marble, amphitheatrical rows stand on supports decorated with high relief lions' paws. The major part of the stadium is occupied by the racetrack whose length is 600 Roman steps. It starts at the main entrance and reaches the northern side turning into a bend to accommodate chariot-racing. Part of this sector is displayed under street level and under the open sky. The marble seats and the track are clearly identifiable. In the middle of the bend there is an arched corridor leading out into a street built of large syenite slabs. You can see the impressive bases of the columns supporting the aqueduct, which fed the large reservoir on Taxim Tepe with water from the Rhodope Mountains. During Philippopolis' apogee (2nd –4th c.) the Antique (Roman) stadium was the venue of

the traditional athletic games organized in honour of the god Apollo and Alexander of Macedon. After the Emperor Theodosius the Great suspended the games at the end of the 4th c. the Philippopolis stadium was used as a hippodrome. The final information about it comes from the Byzantine autheress Anna Comnenus (end of the 11thc.) who was deeply impressed by what had remained of the Roman stadium. In its heyday the stadium could seat thirty thousand spectators and was one of the major public facilities in ancient Philippopolis.

Considerable reconstruction work was done on the fortress walls of the acropolis during the Middle Ages. The enormous reservoirs were also properly maintained as they were of crucial importance for the defenders of the fortress, especially during the constant wars against Byzantium. The largest reservoir, rectangular in shape, was on Nebet Tepe and had a capacity of 3000 litres. Now it has been partially restored and is displayed in the park on the hill. There is another large reservoir, cylindrical in shape, in the western corner of the citadel's fortress walls, again on Nebet Tepe. A round-shaped reservoir of smaller size was discovered inside the southern wall of the acropolis, near the Roman theatre. Its massive stone-work cuts deep into the upper tier of the auditorium. Under the foundations of the National Revival churches on the Three Hills archaeologists, while drilling or digging, found remains of the mediaeval temples of the town, which had been the eparchial centre of the Plovdiv diocese for centuries. In the late Middle Ages (15th – 17th c.), during the Ottoman domination, numerous religious and public buildings were erected in Plovdiv. Monuments of Muslim architecture that have survived until our times are not many and only a few are within the area of the Three Hills or its precincts. One of these is the celebrated Jumaya Mosque – built in the 14th –15th centuries and the remarkable Imaret Mosque of 1445 on the right bank of the Maritsa River. Another noteworthy building is Chifte Hamam built in 1582 – a public bath with two separate sections for men and women.

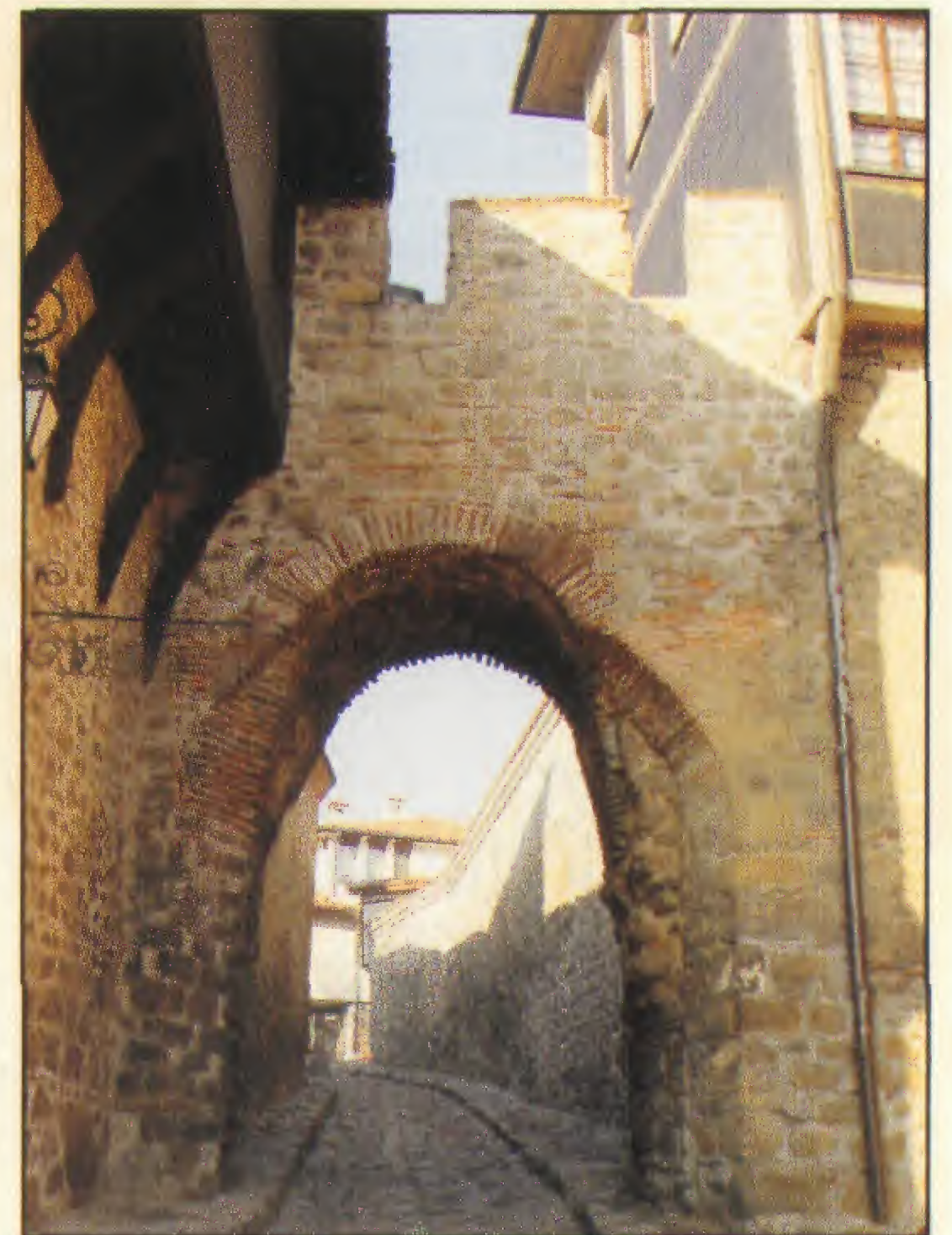
PHILIPPOPOLIS ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLE

at the Hisar Gate

This unique architectural-historical ensemble, one of the symbols of Plovdiv, took shape in the course of centuries around the Hisar fortress gate, which has stood here since the remotest past. Under the cobbled street there are foundations dating from Roman times, from probably the 2nd century. The present-day appearance of the gate is a result of a reconstruction carried out in the 12th – 14th centuries. Above the arch on the outer side of the vault there is a characteristic pattern produced by the construction techniques of the Second Bulgarian State. It consists of stones surrounded by pieces of red brick bonded together with white mortar.



Round Tower and fortress wall south of Hisar Gate



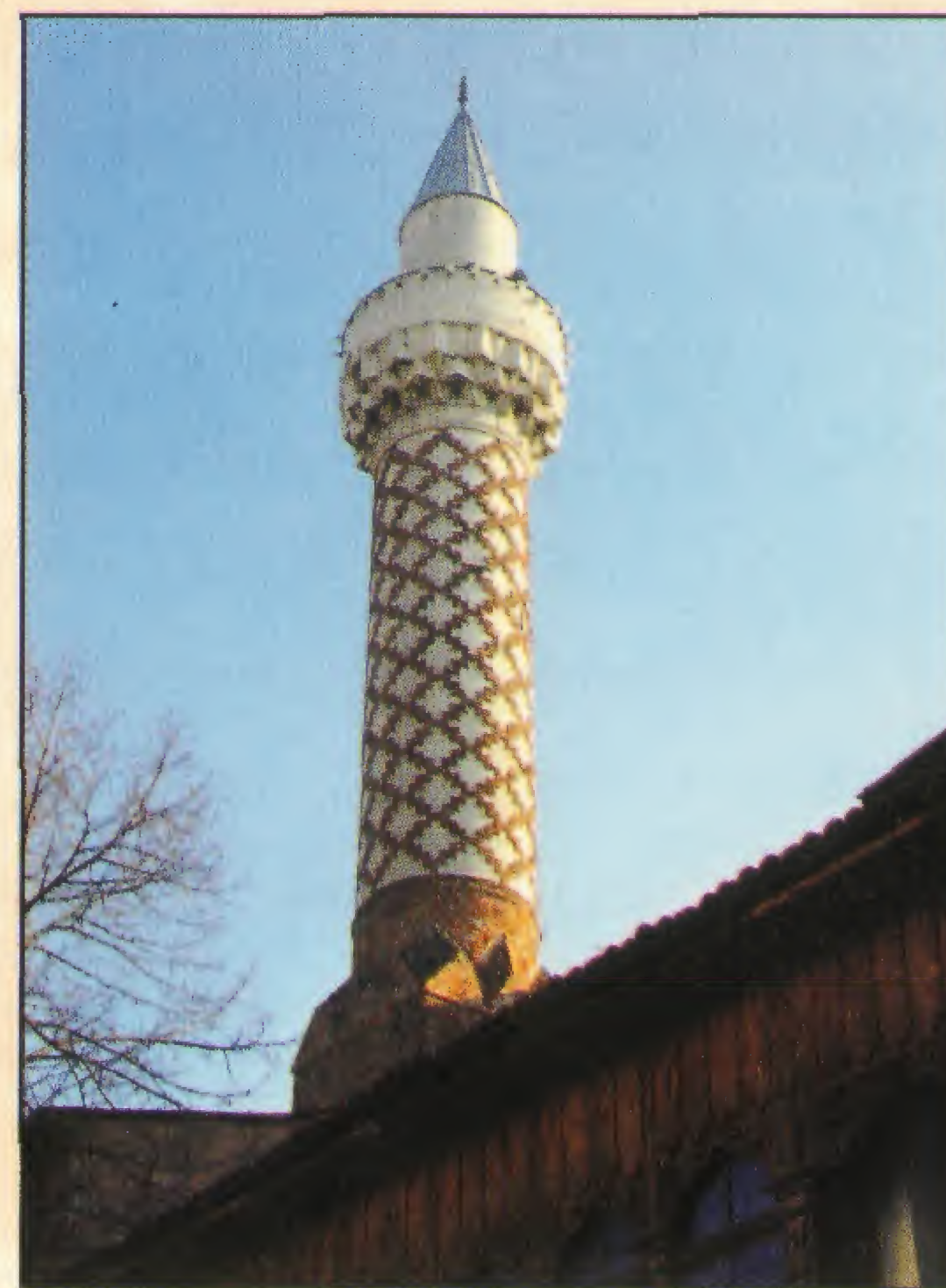
Hisar Gate – the eastern gate of the fortress wall

During the Revival Period and at the beginning of the 20th c. the gate was again reconstructed and fortified. North of the fortress gate you can see the foundations of the old wall which in the 12th – 14th centuries was also built higher. The stonework of the wall was used as a foundation of the large Kuyumjioghlu Revival house, whose majestic body and bay windows dominate Hisar Gate.

To the south the fortress wall 'disappears' into the elevated courtyard of the SS. Constantine and Helena Church. Under its altar was revealed a quadrangular tower, which for many years was used as a crypt. South of Hisar Gate rise the impressive supporting walls of the courtyard of the church and above them, hanging over, is the elegant bay window of the administrative premises. Further south is the eastern entrance into the church with the Holy Sepulchre Convent rising above it. Round the corner of the convent is a good place to look at a big section of the fortress wall with a round defence tower built in. Behind the wall were discovered the premises of barracks. This particular section of the fortress wall was built during the reign of Justinian the Great (the middle of the 6th c.). A small picturesque square encircled by the walls of the church compound, the back side of Kuyumjioghlu House and the façade of Dimiter Georgiadi House lies outside the Eastern Gate.

JUMAYA MOSQUE

Today, as in the time of Ottoman domination, Jumaya Mosque is the major Muslim temple in Plovdiv. At the time when the Ottomans conquered the town in 1371 this was the site of the cathedral of Plovdiv dedicated to St. Petka (Paraskeva) of Turnovo. Under the Sultan Murad II (1421 – 1451) the old cathedral was torn down and the mosque built in its place. It was called Ulu Jumaya Mosque – Chief Friday Mosque i.e. having the status of a cathedral. It was also called Muradie in honour of the sultan who ordered its construction. It is one of the oldest Ottoman temples on





the Balkans and one of the largest in Bulgaria. The building is an imposing rectangular structure whose prayer hall measures 33m by 27m. It is executed in the so-called 'cellular' construction technique, which testifies to a Byzantine and Old-Bulgarian architectural influence. The mosque has nine domes covered with lead sheets. A slim minaret rises over the northeastern corner of the main façade. It is decorated with a diagonal grid of red bricks arranged over white mortar.

Jumaya Mosque is three-aisle with a wide central nave covered by three semi-spherical domes carried by pendentives built in the spaces between the pointed arches. Trough-shaped vaults cover the lateral aisles. Having entered the mosque one finds a spacious, impressive auditorium ending in a lavishly decorated sanctuary – mihrab at the far end. The amazing wall paintings are a riot of vegetative representations – twigs, flowers and garlands interspersed with medallions containing quotations from the Koran. The frescoes probably date from the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. The interior and exterior architecture of the Plovdiv mosque is reminiscent of some of the oldest Ottoman cult monuments in Bursa, Adrianople and Sofia built in 14th –15th centuries.



Jumaya Mosque, interior

MEVLEVI HANE

The only Muslim religious building on the high ground of the Three Hills is the Mevlevi Hane Dervish monastery. It belonged to the Persian religious community of the Order of the Dancing Dervishes, the so-called melevi. The site occupies a large area inside the eastern fortress wall of the acropolis on the northern side of Jambaz Tepe. There had been a Christian monastery here, which was probably destroyed in 1410 during the internecine wars in the Ottoman Empire. The Mevlevi Hane monastery comprises a prayer house – the mosque, a hall for ritual dancing and living premises. At the end of the 19th c. the monastery was abandoned and only the dancing hall has survived today. It was built at the beginning of the 19th c. and is almost square in shape (14m by 16m). The interior design includes eight slim oak pillars supporting an octahedron round the wooden ceiling. The octahedron is plastered and frescoed with garlands and eight medallions with quotations from the Koran. There is an elaborate sun carved in wood in the centre of the ceiling. The eastern part of the building stands on a high stone plinth and overlies a section of the antique acropolis fortress wall. This particular section is part of the wall reconstructed in the 6th c. in the time of the Emperor Justinian. To the north of Mevlevi Hane archaeological excavations discovered remains of the fortification wall of the antique city with premises for various functions attached to the inner side of the wall. The remains are now displayed in an underground hall set up under the courtyard of the monastery complex. The exterior of the building is rather simple but the



Mevlevi Hane

interior decoration rich in woodcarving and frescoes is strikingly lavish. The workmanship of the ornamental details testifies to the great talent of the Bulgarian master-builders from the National Revival as well as to the impact their art had even upon Muslim religious temples. After a successful restoration some three decades ago, Mevlevi Hane has been transformed into a restaurant in the Oriental Persian style bearing one of the old appellations of Plovdiv – Puldin.

Plovdiv has a large Christian community belonging to three denominations which have existed for centuries: Orthodox, Catholic and Armenian Apostolic. In the Revival Period the spiritual life of the town was predominantly shaped by the Orthodox religious community in which besides the major Bulgarian ethnic group there were also Greeks. At the beginning of the 18th c. the brisk development of trade and crafts brought prosperity to the Christian population of Plovdiv and gave rise to intensive religious construction. In the 30s and 40s of the 19th c. the numerous Bulgarian Orthodox community became leading in the building of new Orthodox churches. By the time of the Liberation, some fifty years later, there were twelve new churches in Plovdiv. Eight of them have survived on the Three Hills today in a comparatively good state of preservation. They are the St. Marina Metropolitan Church, the Holy Virgin Cathedral, the churches of the SS. Constantine and Helena, of Sveta Nedelya with its St. Presentation of the Virgin Chapel, of St. Nikola, St. Petka and St. Dimiter. The Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Kevork (St. George) built in 1828 should also be mentioned, as it is located within the Old Town.

The Revival Orthodox churches in the Old Town were created by some of the most outstanding figures of the Bulgarian schools of architecture, woodcarving and painting of that period. The construction work was commissioned to renowned masters of the Bratsigovo School. The iconostases were carved by masters of the illustrious Debar School of woodcarving and to masters from Metsovo in Epirus. The iconography was executed by icon-painters

of the Samokov and Adrianople Schools of painting and abounds in creations by such famous artists as Zahari Zograf, his elder brother Dimiter Zograf and the latter's son Stanislav Dospevski, by Nicola Odrinchanin and others. The major part of the Revival churches in Plovdiv belongs to the common at the time architectural type of the three-aisle pseudo-basilica. After the Crimean War (1853 –1856) when the restrictions imposed by the Ottoman authorities were suspended, the first bell-towers and domed basilicas appeared in Plovdiv.

ST. MARINA METROPOLITAN CHURCH

Plovdiv Diocese and its ecclesiastical administration represented by the Plovdiv Orthodox Bishopric have a long history. They were established at the beginning of the New Era, as early as the middle of the 1st c. as a result of the evangelizing activity of Apostle Erm, who was sent to Thrace by Apostle Paul himself. The first Christian community in the Thracian lands appeared in Plovdiv. This explains why the ecclesiastical authority of the eparchy founded subsequently was set up here. For centuries on end the seat of the eparchy – the Plovdiv Orthodox Bishopric was housed below the rocky southern slopes of Taxim Tepe. In mediaeval times, even before the Ottoman invasion, the metropolitan church was devoted to the martyr St. Marina. The temple was demolished and rebuilt on numerous occasions. In 1851 it had to be raised from its very foundations. At that time some of



*St. Marina Metropolitan Church.
The iconostasis from 1828*



the restrictions on the construction of Christian churches were suspended, and it was possible to erect a much more imposing and befitting temple. The church was built by masters headed by Nicola Tomchev-Ustabashiiski of the Bratsigovo School of construction, a man known far beyond the boundaries of Thrace. The temple is designed in the style of the spacious and imposing pseudo-basilicas of the Revival Period. Inside, seven pairs of slender columns crowned by a polyhedral dome divide it into three aisles. To add to the solemn effect, a colonnade encircles the narthex on the western side. The Metropolitan Church was completed in 1856. Four years later the narthex was

frescoed with scenes from the Old Testament by icon-painter Nikita Odrinchanin. Before the old church was pulled down its well-preserved, valuable and magnificently carved iconostasis was taken to pieces and put together again in the new building. It is executed in walnut by the renowned masters Kosta Kotsi and Kosta Pasiko from Metsovo. They worked for eight years to create a remarkable piece of art in the style and the spirit of the highest achievements in woodcarving in the National Revival. A big part of the old icons painted in the 40s of the 19th c. by the famous icon-painter Nikola Odrinchanin has also been preserved. In 1860 the icons of Jesus Christ and the Holy Virgin by the prominent Revival artist Stanislav Dospevski were added to both sides of the king's gates of the iconostasis. An imposing architectural ensemble surrounds the Metropolitan Church. A five-storey bell tower, not quite in the style of local tradition, rises over the northern gate in the wall. It was entirely built of wood in 1870 and is 17m high. Adjacent to the tower is the old Metropolitan library. A fine marble

fountain stands in the courtyard. East of the church is the building of the Plovdiv Orthodox Diocese erected in the 80s of the 19th century.

THE HOLY VIRGIN CATHEDRAL

A church dedicated to the Assumption has existed in Plovdiv in the course of centuries. On the site of the present Orthodox cathedral there was a mediaeval church in the 9th – 10th c. It was renovated to become the town's cathedral in 1189, in the the time of Bishop Konstantin Pantehni. A monastery was founded next to the cathedral, which in 1371 was demolished by the Osmanli Turks after the conquest of the town. By the Revival the mediaeval church had become rather decrepit and too small for the numerous parishioners. In 1844 it was demolished and builders from Bratsigovo erected an imposing three-aisle pseudo-basilica in its place. The names of the original donors are known, they were the brothers Vulko and Stoyan Teodorovitch Chalukovi, tax-collectors from Koprivshtitsa who settled in Plovdiv at the beginning of the 19th c. The brothers were champions of the awakening of the Bulgarian national consciousness and of the construction of churches. Inside the cathedral six pairs of slim columns ending in splendid Corinthian capitals divide the nave into three aisles covered by a solid vaulted ceiling. The Debur School masters, the brothers Andon and Dimiter Stanishev, were commissioned to carve the iconostasis and they executed it in the Empire style. The icon of the Assumption and most of the other icons were created by renowned Nikola Odrinchanin, newly-settled in Plovdiv at the time. At the end of 1859 a religious service, the first in decades, was held in Bulgarian in the church of the



Holy Virgin – an achievement in the struggle for an autonomous Bulgarian Church. On March 12th 1860 Bishop Paisii served the first liturgy in Bulgarian. 40 Bulgarian priests from the main towns in Plovdiv Diocese attended the great event and celebrated officially the separation of the National Church from the Istanbul (Constantinople) Patriarchate. It was in this church that, after the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1872, Plovdiv welcomed its first Bulgarian bishop – Metropolitan Bishop Panaret.



After the Liberation in 1881 architect Joseph Schnitter added a belfry to the western door of the cathedral designed in the currently modern style of Russian Classicism. It is an imposing three-storey structure crowned by a dome. On its western side there is an inscription: 'In memory of the liberators' – a dedication to the Russian troops who liberated the town on the 4th January 1878. A thanksgiving service was held in the church in honour of the Liberation on the same date. An old cemetery lies to the east of the cathedral under whose elaborately wrought tombstones are buried eminent Plovdivian clerics and notable citizens. People who fought for an independent Bulgarian church were laid here, such as the metropolitan bishops Panaret, Natanail and Maxim as well as national Revival figures – Hristo Danov, Yoakim Gruev, Stoyan Chalukov and Iskro Kesjakov.

SS. CONSTANTINE AND HELENA CHURCH

Years of archaeological research, conservation and restoration work at the site of the SS. Constantine and Helena Church, rising very near the eastern Hisar Gate into the acropolis, have created a remarkable antique and Revival architectural complex. The excavations uncovered

a considerable section of the fortress of the antique city to the south of Hisar Gate and as far as the round tower on the corner. At the end of the antique period this part of the Three Hills became a Christian sanctuary devoted to Severian and Mnemon who died for the creed together with 38 Plovdivian martyrs killed here in the time of Emperor Diocletian in 304. Later on the church was dedicated to the apostles SS. Constantine and Helena. At the beginning of the 19th c. the church at Hisar Gate was in a tumbledown state. On the initiative of the chief warden Todor Moravenov, an influential notable and a native of Koprivshtitsa, considerable funds were raised in 1830 for the restoration of this oldest Orthodox church in Plovdiv. In 1832 another Plovdivian worthy, Vulko Kurtovitch Chalukov, procured a sultan's firman granting



*SS. Constantine and Helena Church.
The iconostasis decorated
in 'Viennese' style*



*SS. Constantine and Helena Church –
Bell Tower*

permission for the simultaneous construction of the churches of SS. Constantine and Helena and St. Nedelya. The buildings were completed within the same year. Today the SS. Constantine and Helena Church is a holy historic place and a monument to the talent of some of the most outstanding builders, carvers, icon-and mural-painters of Bulgaria. Petko Bozveliyata, a renowned master-builder from Bratsigovo, designed the magnificent three-aisle basilica – one of the first to be built in Plovdiv.

In 1836 Yoan Paskulis from Metsovo completed the lofty iconostasis, adorned with splendid baroque carving and modelled on 'Viennese' specimens. All the icons on the iconostasis were painted in 1836 - 1840 by one of the greatest artists in the Revival Period – Zahari Hritovitch Zograf. Later Nikola Odrinchanin and Stanislav Dospevski added to the ornamentation of the church. In 1864 –1866 the interior walls were entirely painted by Stefan Andohov and Atanas Podzhenov, both from Pazarjik. They did the colouring and gilding of the 'Viennese' iconostasis. A 6m –8m high stone wall surrounds the Church of the SS. Constantine and Helena and its compound. There are several additional buildings along the inner side of the wall - a tall four-storey bell tower, an administrative premise, a school, living premises and a marble fountain. At the eastern gate of the courtyard is the small building of the Holy Sepulchre Cloister, which in the 17th -19th c. accommodated the monks representing the holy city of Jerusalem. Nowadays the building of the former primary school has been reconstructed into a permanent exhibition of iconography in the area of Plovdiv.





REVIVAL PERIOD ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLES

Old Plovdiv has rows of Revival Period private and public buildings scattered all over the Three Hills and forming ensembles of unique atmosphere enhanced by their picturesqueness and amphitheatrical position along the sloping streets. Most prominent are the buildings on the streets Tsanko Lavrenov, K. Nektariev, Dr Chomakov, Strumna, 4th January, Architect Hristo Peev and Saborna

ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLE

on Tsanko Lavrenov Street

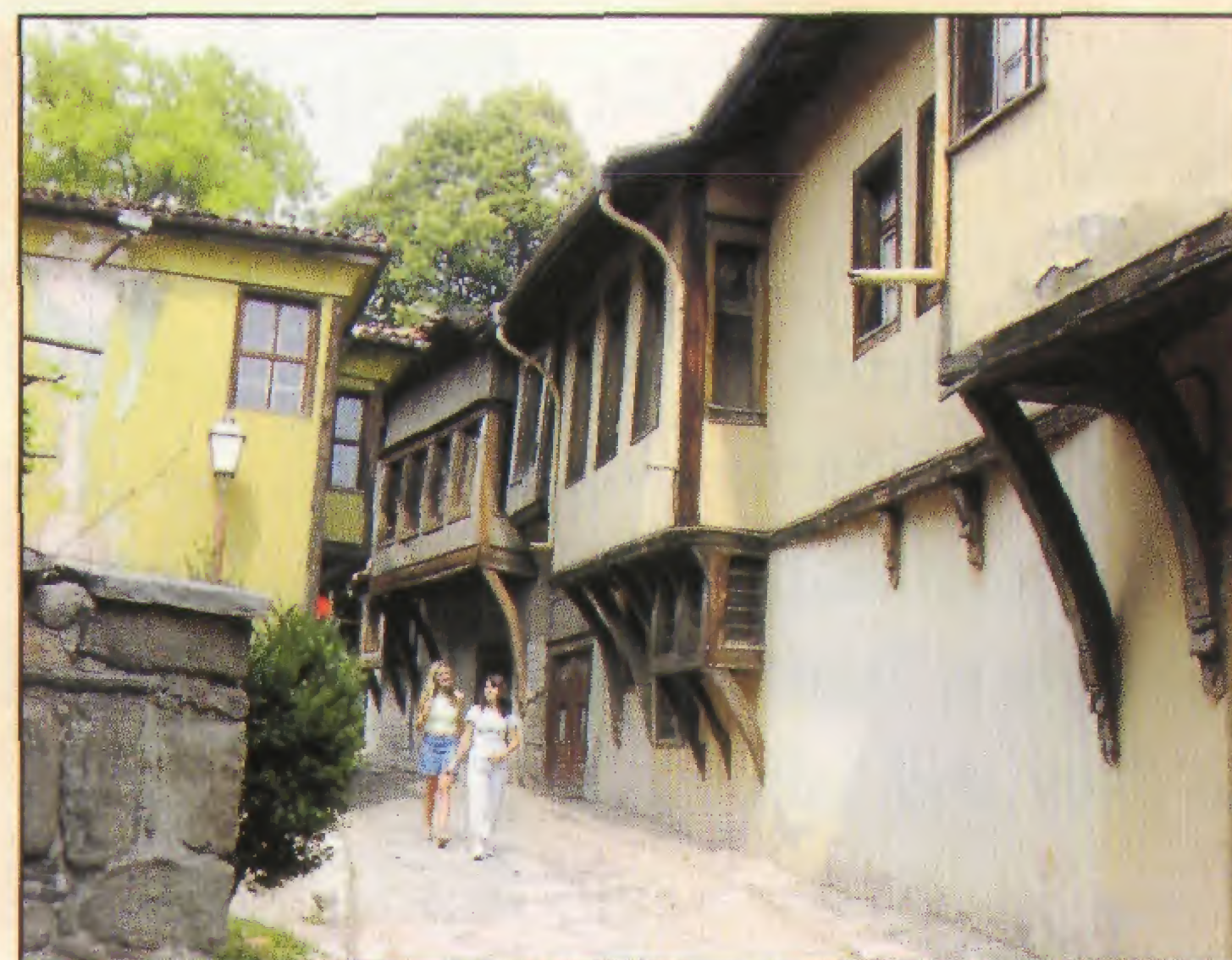
Along the northern side of the steep cobbled street, which goes through the Hisar Gate there is a striking ensemble of some of the most interesting Revival houses in Plovdiv. Because of the terrain the houses stand in a terrace-like order on the northern side of the street. Up on the saddle above Hisar Gate there rises the stately body of the largest Revival house – the home of Argir Kuyumjioghlu. To the right of the Gate you can see the broken up façade of Dimiter Georgiadi's house. Further down high stone walls hide the houses of Nikola Nedkovich and Ivan Chernozemski. At the very end of the street there rise the bell tower and the dome of the SS. Constantine and Helena Church. The street bears the name of the distinguished Bulgarian painter Tsanko Lavrenov, the author of many paintings of Old Plovdiv.



ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLE

on Dr Stoyan Chomakov Street

The Revival Period houses on this street are some of the oldest in Plovdiv, most of them built at the end of the 18th century. At the beginning of the street, behind a high stone wall and at the far end of a spacious courtyard is Kuyumjioghlu's magnificent house, now the Ethnographic Muse-



um of Plovdiv. The terraced houses on the eastern side of the upper end of the street are noteworthy, too. Their jutting eaves almost meet over the narrow lane. To the west a blind alley ends at the solid iron-studded gate to Atanas Krustev's house.

ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLE

on Kiril Nectariev Street

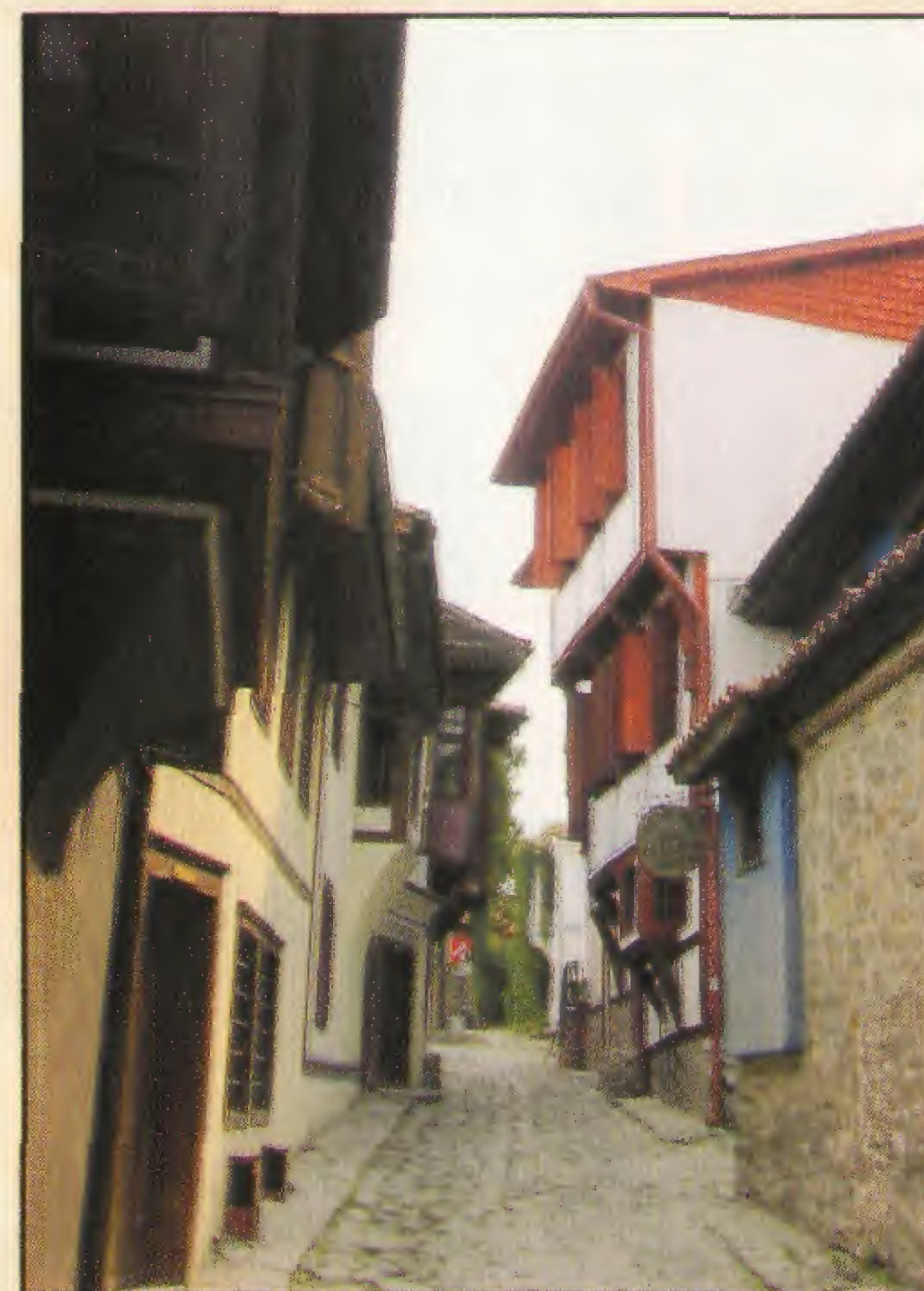
This cobbled street, meandering over the eastern side of Jambaz Tepe to form the shape of a yoke has the greatest number of well-preserved Revival houses of varied architectural



*Kiril Nectariev Street.
The house with Alafrangite*

type, built from the late 18th to the late 19th centuries. In some places they are terraced with overhanging wide eaves and picturesque bay windows facing the street, in others – they

peer out from over the high stone walls and gates. The romance of bygone time wafts from every nook and corner. A big part of the houses are still dwelt in and their owners keep small eating places and cafes out on the terraced streets and tiny squares. The most distinguished house here is Georgi Danchoy's, built in the 18th c. Georgi Danchoy was a faithful associate of Vasil Levski's, Bulgaria's 'Apostle of



freedom' in the struggle against the foreign rule. Another quite impressive house is Veren Stambolyan's. Symmetrical in design, with a gracious bay window overhanging the street, it is situated in a deep gardened courtyard. Most original for its architecture and interior design is the so-called House with the alafrangas. Each room of this house, built at the turn of the 19th c. has an attractive ornamental niche – alafranga – with painted townscapes and decorative patterns. The street is named after a benefactor of education in Plovdiv and its area – father Kiril Nectariev, born in Sopot and for many years a coadjutor at the Plovdiv diocese in the 19th c.



REVIVAL PERIOD HOUSES

Plovdiv's residential architecture of the Revival Period is a veritable peak in the development of Bulgarian architecture in general. Starting from the end of the 17th c. Plovdiv grew steadily as an important economic centre and in the middle of the 19th c. it was the biggest town in the heartland of the Bulgaria lands. The greater financial means of the population promoted the construction of a new type of urban houses – the so-called Plovdiv house. In the 18th and 19th c. it went through two phases – symmetrical and asymmetrical. The earliest specimens of asymmetrical houses preserved date back to the end of the 18th c. They have expressive facades broken up by bay windows, balconies facing the courtyard and a veranda with wooden pillars on the ground floor. Some of the noteworthy houses of this type are Furnadjiev House at 53 Dr Stoilov St., the house of Haji Vlasaki Chohadjiyata (housing Old Plovdiv Association), Dr. Vlado's House at 7 Puldin St., Danchov House and others. The symmetrical type of house appeared in the 30s of the 19th c. Its characteristic feature is a centrally positioned grand drawing-room – hayet, with rooms of equal size standing around it. Apart from the symmetrical plan these houses feature rich baroque paintings on the walls and the traditional woodcarvings on the ceilings, doors and cupboards. There is no doubt this magnificent residential architecture is justifiably referred to as the 'Bulgarian baroque'. Two remarkable specimens of the period are the houses of Kuyumjioghlu and Georgiadi, built in 1846 –1848 by the gifted master-builder from the Rhodope area, Haji Georgi. Some other symmetrical houses are the homes of Haji Dragan Kaloferetsa, Artin Gidikov, Georgi Mavridi (where Lamartine stayed in 1933), Hajikalchev and others.



HAJI PANAYOT LAMPSHA – BALABANOV HOUSE

57 Dr Stoilov Street

This magnificent house built at the beginning of the 19th c. dominates the junction of three streets: 4th January, Dr. Stoilov and Antranik. The big gate off the street and the opposite second gate into the courtyard take you into an oblong, high ceilinged vestibule around which were the storerooms and household premises. An inner stair-case leads up to the upper floor designed

in a strictly symmetrical plan and into the drawing-

room, glassed in from the sides of the courtyard and the street. The central part of the room is in the grand style and has a lavishly carved wooden ceiling with a flaming sun set in the centre. Each of the four rooms around has a particular individuality produced by the original carvings of the ceilings complemented by painted arch-shaped designs in the centre. The rooms and



*Balabanov House.
The drawing-room with Empire furniture.*



*Balabanov House.
The grand hayet on the second floor.*

the spacious drawing-room are furnished with restored old-world furniture, fabrics and other articles exemplifying the taste and affluence of the rich citizens of Plovdiv. Today the house is used as a multifunctional venue for exhibitions, theatrical performances, concerts, cultural and business meetings etc. A collection of contemporary paintings belonging to the Old Plovdiv Association is on display on the ground floor.



Balabanov House. Woodcarved ceiling with a trefoil pattern on the second floor.

STEPAN HINDLIYAN HOUSE

4 Artin Gidikov Street

The house was commissioned by and built for the wealthy merchant and landowner Stepan Hindliyan in 1835 –1840. The design of the exterior is opulent, focusing on the expressive main façade with a centrally positioned portico. Of all the Revival houses preserved in Plovdiv this is the most lavishly ornamented one. Two master-decorators from Chirpan, Moko and Mavrudi, worked for over six months painting the walls from the inside and outside and creating wall piers, garlands of plant and geometrical ornaments, vignettes, still lifes and landscapes. The



Stepan Hindliyan House. Main fasade.

ceilings are extravagantly decorated and coloured tastefully in the Oriental style, patterns do not repeat themselves. Each room has its own atmosphere achieved through the alafranga niches and the naivete and beauty of the landscapes from Alexandria, Constantinople, Venice, Stockholm and other cities. There is an original Oriental-style bathroom on the ground floor featuring domes, vaults, recesses, a marble floor and a basin with attractive fittings. Behind the tall stone wall off the street, there is the maaza – the household depository for valuables. It is entirely built of stone with strong iron doors and solid bars over the windows. Hindliyan House is fitted out with authentic old-world furniture and together with Balabanov House make up a joint complex which displays 'The urban style of life in the Revival Period' exhibition.



*Stepan Hindliyan House.
A panel of landscapes in a guest-room.*



*Stepan Hindliyan House.
Wall painting of a Venice townscape.*



*Stepan Hindliyan House. Ornamental and landscape
frescoes over the entrance into the maaza
from the side of the courtyard.*

NIKOLA NEDKOVICH HOUSE

3 Tsanko Lavrenov Street

This Revival Period home was built in 1863 entirely in the style of European Classicism. It belonged to Nikola Nedkovich, a well-known merchant and public figure, born in Karlovo. The lavishly decorated façade of the house has a solemn portico supported by four pillars. The pillars are of stone and their capitals hold up semicircular arches. An elegant triangular pediment at the top is reproduced in a smaller scale over each of the three windows. Foreign researchers studying the Bulgarian National Revival architecture have likened the building to an Italian palatio from the time of the Renaissance. Stone steps in the portico lead to the lower floor and the large drawing-room with a carved wooden ceiling and a representation of the sun 'shining' in the centre. The rooms positioned symmetrically round the hayet are remarkable – they have carved wooden ceilings adorned with an interlaced design of geometrical figures and richly frescoed walls. The rooms facing the yard, one in delicate green and the other in Pompeian red, have townscapes from various European cities. The upper floor was completed in the 80s of the 19th c. and the interior design of the rooms is characteristic of the first decades after the Liberation. Today Nedkovich House is set up as an exhibition of the 'Urban style of life in the Revival Period', showing the furnishing of the rich houses in Plovdiv in the 19th c. The furniture and household articles on display once belonged to the Nedkovich family.



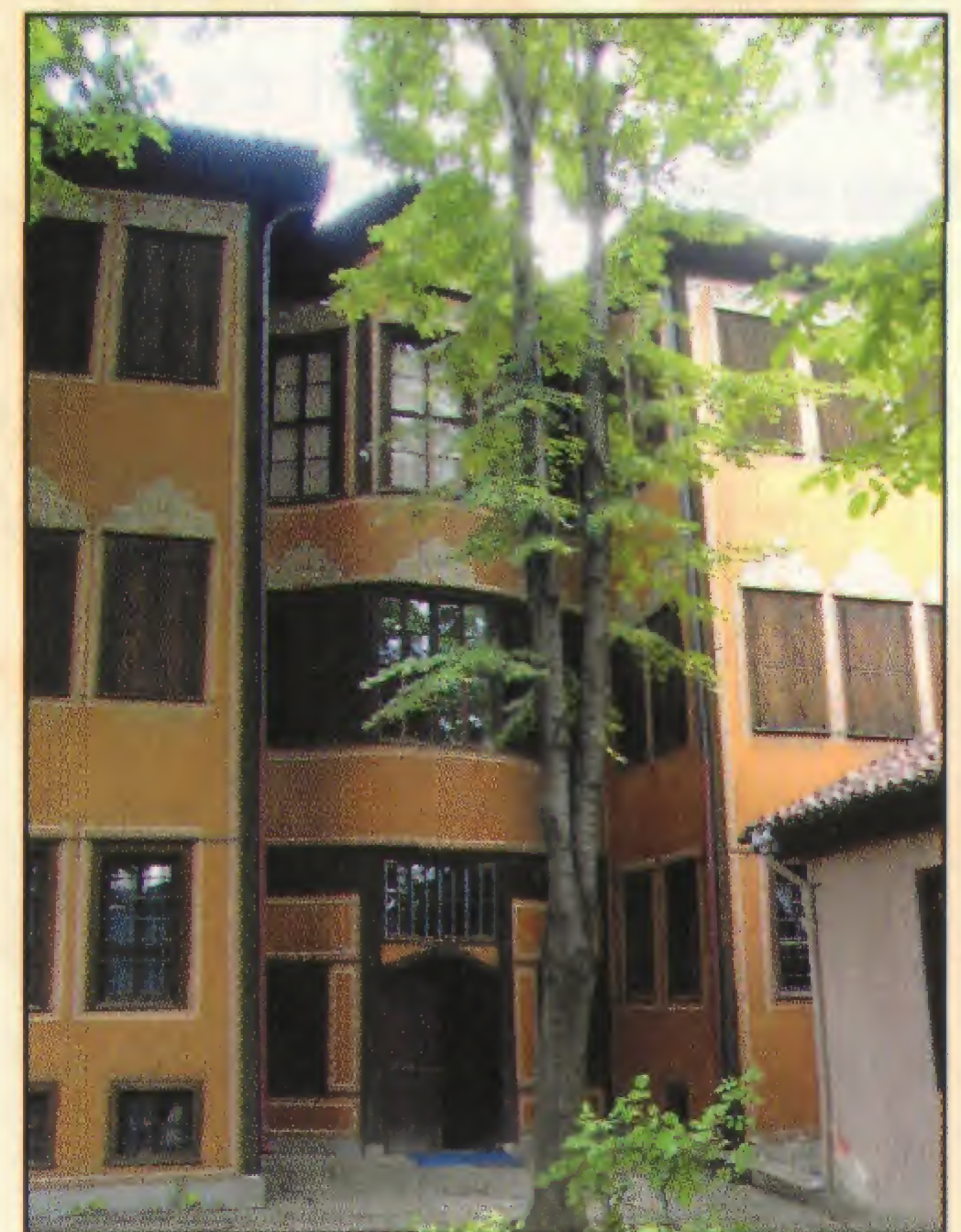
THE MUSEUMS IN THE OLD TOWN

Several of the museums of Plovdiv are to be found on the territory of the Architectural-Historical Reserve. Here are the History Museum set out in two of the Revival houses, the Ethnographical Museum in Kuyumjioghlu House, the Town Art Gallery arranged in four separate buildings and four theme museum collections.

HISTORY MUSEUM – REVIVAL PERIOD EXHIBITION

(Dimiter Georgiadi House), 1 Tsanko Lavrenov Street

The Plovdiv History Museum comprises 4 large departments founded in different years and unified in 1993. They trace the historical development of Plovdiv and its area from the early Ottoman period (15th –17th c.) until modern time (the end of the 20th c.). 'The Bulgarian lands in the 15th – the 19th c. and the period of National Revival' exhibition was set up in 1954 and is laid out in the house of the rich merchant Dimiter Georgiadi. This is one of the most attractive Revival houses in the Old Town, built in 1848 by Haji Georgi Hajiiski, a master-builder from the Rhodopes. The exhibition shows the early-Ottoman (15th – 17th c.) period and the resistance the local population put up against the foreign rule. The museum emphasizes the National Revival in several rooms. There are documents, personal possessions and valuables that have belonged to eminent public figures, who contributed to the economic and educational development of the town and to the establishment of an auton-



Dimiter Georgiadi House



Dimiter Georgiadi House. The second floor drawing-room with part of the museum display.

omous church. The exhibits trace the revolutionary movement and the activity of its leaders – Rakovski, Levski and Botev. The interior architecture of the magnificent house enhances the atmosphere of the museum. Especially impressive is the second floor with the strict symmetry of the oval drawing-room and the four rooms around it. Both the hayet and the rooms are decorated with original wood-carvings on the ceilings and exuberant frescoes on the walls.

BOOK-PRINTING IN BULGARIA EXHIBITION

(Hristo G. Danov Museum-house), 2 Mitropolit Paisii Street

This historic building houses the exhibition of the Plovdiv History Museum devoted to book printing in Bulgaria set up in 1975. The house is typical of the symmetrical type of house in Plovdiv. Its cellar and basement perched picturesquely upon the sheer rock of Taxim Tepe look down on Saborna Street. The side facing the courtyard is one-storey with a portico supported by four columns and crowned by a yoke-shaped pediment. The walls of the house are opulently frescoed within and without. The drawing-room in the centre has a ceiling ornamented with a carved sun and interesting exot-



ic landscapes. Hristo G. Danov, justifiably called 'the Bulgarian Gutenberg', bought the house in 1860 and lived in it until his death in 1911. The exhibition tells about the pioneer booksellers in the Revival times and about Hristo Danov, the first modern book-publisher. A section of the exhibition is devoted to another publisher and a contemporary of Danov's – Dragan Manchov. On display is a replica of the bookshop at Danov's publishing-house and of a Revival classroom.

ETHNOGRAPHICAL MUSEUM (Kuyumjioghlu House)

No 2 Dr Chomakov Street

The eminent Bulgarian ethnographer and a specialist in the history and customs of the Rhodope Mountains - Stoyu Shishkov laid the beginnings of the museum as far back as 1917, but it became an official institution in 1952. The exhibition comprises the extensive material and spiritual culture of the Plovdiv area, whose historical boundaries stretch between the Balkan Range and the Central Rhodope Mountains and from the upper reaches of the Maritsa River to the Chirpan Heights. The exhibition traces the development of farming, crafts and trade. The wealth of popular culture is exemplified by the collections of traditional clothes, fabrics, embroidery, music and dances. The latter reflect the characteristics of the two main ethnographic groups of the area – the Ruptsi and the Thracian. The museum has been laid out on the two floors of the most famous house in Plovdiv – the home of Argir Kuyumjioghlu. It was built in 1847 by the master-builder from the Rhodopes – Haji Georgi Hajiiski. The house is a syn-



Argir Kuyumjioghlu House



*Argir Kuyumjioghlu House.
The drawing-room with its decorated ceiling and
part of the museum display.*

thesis of the talent of the master-builder and the advanced European orientated taste of the rich Plovdivian. The building covers an area of 570 square meters and consists of the dwelling premises and a household annex to the south. The courtyard is full of greenery, with a marble fountain and a well and is surrounded by a high stone wall. In the southwestern corner of the wall stands a small watch oriel. The magnificently ornamented main façade looks to the garden. The portico projects out, a position required by the projecting out wall of the drawing-room on the second floor. This baroque element is in

marvellous harmony with the exquisite line of the yoke-shaped pediments over the second floor, the numerous windows and the frescoes on the facade. From the portico you enter the drawing-room on the first floor; on the left a wide stairway leads to the second floor and into the grand hayet, the focal room of the house. It is of impressive size – 18.50m by 11m and the ceiling is a riot of woodcarving and frescoes.

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE COLLECTION

(Georgi Mavridi House) 19 Knyaz Tseretelev Street

This small but memorable exhibition of the life and work of the eminent French poet and politician is arranged in the house of Georgi Mavridi. In the summer of 1833, during Lamartine's travels in the Orient, he stayed here for three days and since then the house has been associated with his name. Mavridi's House is one of the biggest and most beautiful in Old

Plovdiv. An unknown master-builder has managed to overcome the difficulties posed by the sloping terrain in a brilliant way. The foundations and the ground floor of the house have an irregular outline while the two upper floors have the typical symmetrical plan. Each of them juts out over the floor below which considerably increases the living area of the house by adding to its height. People compare it to a bird spreading wings before flying off, an effect achieved by its position on the corner of Zora and Knyaz Tseretelev streets and by its being in good sight from the foot of Jambaz Tepe.

THE 'HIPPOCRATES' PHARMACY COLLECTION

(Dr. Sotir Antoniadi House and Chemist's,
16 Saborna Street)

The comparatively small two-storey Revival house is the site of a rich collection dedicated to the history of pharmacy in Plovdiv and the area. The house was built in 1872 for Dr. Sotir Antoniadi – a notable representative of the Greek ethnic community in Plovdiv, one of the first academically trained doctors before the Liberation. The



*Georgi Mavridi House,
site of 'Alphonse de Lamartene' collection.*



*Dr. S. Antoniadi House –
the old-world 'Hippocrates' Pharmacy.*

building has an asymmetrical plan and is quite solid. The pharmacy was on the ground floor and the doctor's family lived on the upper floor. The ceilings of the house are plastered and decorated with painted rosettes and plant ornaments. The museum pharmacy was opened in 1981 and is unique for the country. It is a truthful representation of the typical Plovdiv pharmacy of old times and has a functioning counter for the purchase of contemporary medicines.

CITY ART GALLERY

(The former Girls' School)

14 Saborna Street

The distinguished-looking building of the former Girls' Secondary School of Plovdiv now houses the permanent exhibition of the City Art Gallery. Over 300 paintings, graphics and sculptures show the development of art from the time of the National Revival to our days. One can see here the oldest portrait in Bulgarian art, executed by an unknown artist from Tryavna, of Sofronii Vrachanski as well as works by Stanislav Dospevski, Nikolai Pavlovich, Georgi Danchoy, Anton Mitov, Hristo Stanchev and Ivan Mrkvicka.

The exhibition traces the development of the genres of still life, landscape and figured composition from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th c. to our time. The work of painters from Plovdiv is extensively displayed, starting from the establishment of the 'Association of the Artists from Southeast Bulgaria' in 1912 to the present day.

The City Art Gallery of Plovdiv was set up in 1952. Its permanent exhibition is arranged in





the historic building of the Girls' School. The first modern Bulgarian school in Plovdiv, opened in 1850, was housed in a building on this site. It was also known by the name of SS. Cyril and Methodius Plovdiv Eparchial School. It was here that the day of the creators of the Bulgarian alphabet was first celebrated on May 11th 1856 on the initiative of Naiden Gerov and Yoakim Gruev. Thus May 11th became an all-Bulgarian holiday during

the Revival. In 1868 the Boys' School grew into a secondary school and moved into another building, while the newly-founded Girls' School was accommodated here. Soon after the Liberation the number of students increased and, moreover, it became necessary to build a girls' secondary school, too. So in 1881 the present imposing building was erected on the site of the old school. It was designed by Joseph Schnitter, an architect from Plovdiv.

ICON COLLECTION

of the City Art Gallery

22 Saborna Street

The icon collection of the City Art Gallery of Plovdiv was founded in 1975. It was laid out in the school at the SS. Constantine and Helena Church. The icons in the exhibition belong to the 15th –19th centuries. They are remarkable works of art pro-



duced in Plovdiv and its area, but also in other parts of South Bulgaria. There are icons painted by the most eminent Revival artists such as Zahari Tsanyov from Tryavna, Hristo Dimitrov and his sons Dimiter and Zahari Zograf from Samokov, Nikola Odrinchanin and other representatives of the Tryavna, Samokov and Adrianople Schools of painting.

The old-world school building housing the collection has original architecture. It is a long rectangular structure whose shorter walls end in imposing triangular pediments, imparting to the house the appearance of an antique temple. The foundations of the building stand right on the fortress wall of the acropolis south of Hisar Gate and next to the so-called Round Tower.

'TSANKO LAVRENOV' PERMANENT EXHIBITION

(Kirkor Mesrobovich House) 11 Artin Gidikov Street

This exhibition of the work of the great artist Tsanko Lavrenov (1896 – 1978) has been displayed on the spacious ground floor of the Mesrobovich period-house since 2002. The paintings belong to the City Art Gallery fund of Plovdiv. The house was built in 1846 on a perfectly symmetrical plan and has ceilings opulently decorated with woodcarving in all the rooms on the ground and upper floor. Its original owner Kirkor Mesrobovich, a notable Armenian from Plovdiv was a big landowner and money-lender and one of the founders of the 'Brothers Mesrobovitch' firm





which continued in business for decades before and after the Liberation.

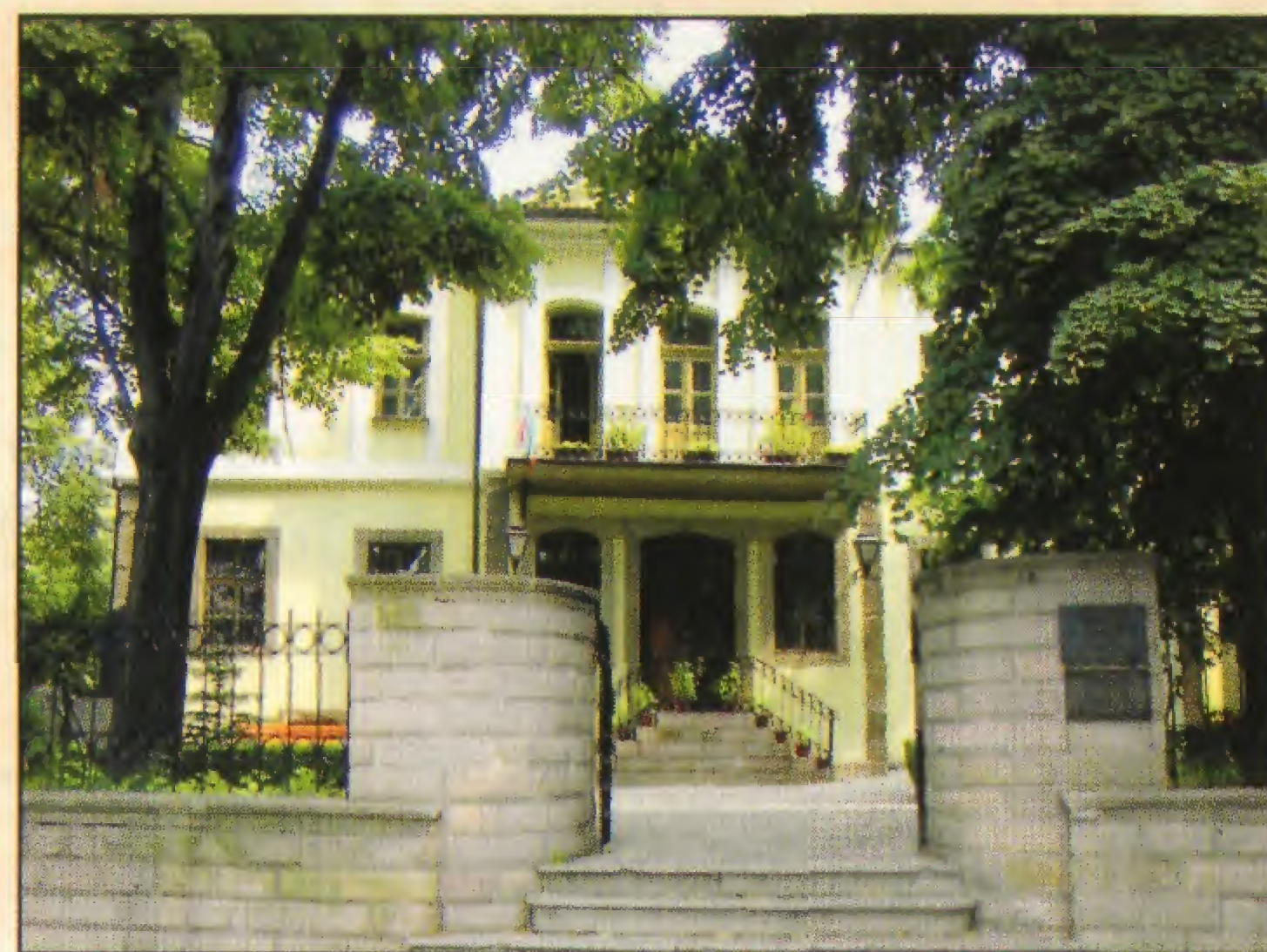
There is a second exhibition on the ground floor – of Mexican art, which displays works by Mexican artists of the 20th century. The rich collection was presented to Bulgaria on the occasion of the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian State and was first shown to the public in 1981 on its present site.

'ZLATYU BOYADJIEV' PERMANENT EXHIBITION

(Stoyan Chomakov House), 18 Saborna Street

The exhibition displaying the work of the great artist Zlatyu Boyadjiev (1903 – 1976) was opened in 1980 in this representative period-house. The multitude of canvases, some of imposing size, is displayed in all rooms of the big two-storey house. In the courtyard in front of the house there is monument to the honoured artist .

The noble Revival house, where the exhibition has been set out, was built for Dr. Stoyan Chomakov in 1860. It was a very modern-looking house for its time although it was a solid symmetrically designed building with facades deco-



rated in the classical style widely spread in Europe at the time. Dr.Chomakov was one of the first academically trained physicians in Plovdiv and was a champion for an autonomous Bulgarian church in the Revival.

After the Liberation the heirs gave the house as a present to King Ferdinand. In the 50s of the 20th c. it housed a branch of the Ivan Vazov Public Library until the time it was entirely renovated and given over for the setting up of the exhibition of the works by Zlatyu Boyadjiev.

'GEORGI BOJILOV – SLONA' PERMANENT EXHIBITION

(Skobelev House), 1 Knyaz Tseretelev Street

This Revival house is adjacent to the Hippocrates Pharmacy. Kostadin Kaftanjiyata, a Bulgarian from the town of Stara Zagora, built it in the 60s of the 19th century. In the years after the Liberation and until her death here lived Olga Skobeleva (1823 –1880), mother of the Russian General Skobelev. She became known for her charity work in aid of the victims of the Turkish atrocities in South Bulgaria during the April Rising and the Liberation War. In gratitude for her concern for the orphaned children in Thrace, the Bulgarians have called her 'Mother Skobeleva'. A memorial park has been dedicated to her off the Istanbul highway in the outskirts of Plovdiv.

At present the house is occupied by the Plovdiv branch of the 'Future for Bulgaria' Foun-



*Skobelev House –
'Georgi Bojilov-Slona' permanent exhibition*

dation. It was with the contribution of the foundation that in 2003 a permanent exhibition of the work of the prominent artist Georgi Bojilov-Slona was arranged. The end-wall of the house, facing Saborna Street is decorated with a commemorative panel dedicated to the artist and executed in paintings and mosaics to the design of Dimiter Kirov.

Apart from the period houses of great artistic and architectural value, Old Plovdiv possesses some buildings of lesser architectural merit but associated with significant events in the past. These are historic places marked with commemorative inscriptions. On Saborna Street opposite the Holy Virgin Cathedral stands the house of Dr. Rashko Petrov, a physician with a medical degree and a prominent revolutionary, who participated in the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade in 1862. There he became friends with Vasil Levski - the 'Apostle of Liberty', who often stayed at Dr. Petrov's house when in Plovdiv. Right after the Liberation War in 1878 the house was the seat of the interim Russian representation headed by the Imperial Commissioner Prince Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov. Next-door to Dr Rashko's place is the house where Dr Konstantin Stoilov, an eminent Bulgarian politician and statesman, Prime Minister of Bulgaria from 1894 to 1899, was born. Along Slaveykov Street there are several Revival houses connected with Petko R. Slaveykov's stay in Plovdiv in 1881 – 1883, when Plovdiv was the capital Eastern Rumelia. He lived in the asymmetrical Revival house of Bedros Basmajyan, now housing the Home of the Teacher and bearing the



Dr Konstantin Stoilov House

name of the great public figure, poet and writer. Close by is the so-called Slaveykov School, established in the distinguished-looking house of Georgi Panchev, where Petko Slaveykov taught. Another place is Slaveykov Café or Georgi Moraliyata's Tavern frequented by the elderly teacher for his morning coffee. At the corner of Kiril Nektariev and Architect Hristo Peev Streets there stands an asymmetrical house from the end of the 18th c. the home for many years of the renowned artist Georgi Dan-



Danchov House

chov Zografina. He was a revolutionary, an associate of Vasil Levski's, an exile in Anatolia and a volunteer in the Russo-Turkish Liberation War. The house has been recently reconstructed by the Chamber of Crafts in Koblenz – Germany and now houses a vocational school. At the upper end of Dr. St. Chomakov Street is the home of the first mayor of Plovdiv after the Liberation, Atanas Samokovets, a prominent public and political figure, brother of the Revival artist Stanislav Dospevski. The corner of Artin Gidikov and 4th January Streets is occupied by the entirely renovated large symmetrical house of Artin Gidikov, an Armenian social figure and benefactor to Armenians and Bulgarians alike. On Saborna Street opposite the imposing building of the Girls' Secondary School there is a memorial plaque reading that the Russian Consulate lay on this site before the Liberation. It was headed in 1957 - 1877 by the Revival figure and man of letters Naiden Gerov and on several occasions visited by Vasil Levski. A very small section of the historic consulate has survived to our time.



*The Yellow School – 'SS. Cyril and Methodius'
First Bulgarian Secondary School.*

One of the most remarkable historic buildings in the Old Town is the Yellow School, called thus because of the colour of its walls. Actually this is the first Bulgarian secondary school to be opened in Plovdiv in 1868, a successor to the well-established diocesan SS. Cyril and Methodius School. The solid building was designed and erected by the well-known Bratsigovo master-builder Todor Dimov. The school is two-storey with an elevated ground floor and sparingly decorated but dignified facades. On the corner of the building on Tsar Ivaylo and T.Samodumov Streets stand the well-preserved inscriptions in Bulgarian and Osmanli Turkish engraved

on a commemorative tablet stating that 'this public secondary school' was built in 1868 by the good will of Sultan Abdul Azzis Khan. The yellow school or the SS. Cyril and Methodius First Bulgarian Secondary School is unique in Bulgaria for being still used as an educational establishment. It houses the folklore department of the Music Academy in Plovdiv.



Balabanov House

Старият Пловдив



SIGHTS IN THE OLD TOWN

1. The Fortress Complex on Nebet Tepe
2. Antique – Revival Period Ensemble on Vitosha Street.
3. Antique Theatre
4. Antique Stadium
5. Hisar Gate Architectural Ensemble
6. Jumaya Mosque
7. Mevlevi Hane (Puldin Restaurant)
8. St. Marina Metropolitan Church
9. Holy Virgin Cathedral
10. SS. Constantine and Helena Church
11. Architectural Ensemble on Tsanko Lavrenov Street
12. Architectural Ensemble on Dr. Chomakov Street
13. Architectural Ensemble on Kiril Nektariev Street
14. Haji Panayot Lampsha House (Balabanov house)
15. Stepan Hindliyan House
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17. History Museum. 'Bulgarian Revival Period Exhibition'. (Dimitar Georgiadi House)
18. 'Book-printing in Bulgaria' Exhibition ('Hristo G. Danov Museum-house')
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23. City Art Gallery Icon Collection
24. 'Tsanko Lavrenov' Permanent Exhibition (Kirkor Mesrobovich House)
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26. 'Georgi Bojilov-Slona' Permanent Exhibition (Skobeleva House)
27. Danchov House
28. The Yellow School (First Bulgarian School)

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